

The Old Hymn.

BY THE KHAN.

The windows and the doors were open.
The splendid church was full of light;
And all along the moonlit street
A stream of music thrilled last night.
A homeless tramp beneath the trees
Stood still to hear that river roll.
And falling on his helpless knees
Heard "Jesus, lover of my soul."

It's thirty years since last he heard
The cadence of that anthem sweet.
And all his startled soul was stirred
Aloof upon that lonely street.
They sang the splendid hymn with grace.
Even children's voices swelled the song.
And down his dragged and stricken face
The scalding tear-drops coursed along.

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."
He heard the final sentence roll.
Then wandered onward with a sigh.
The music waked the better man.
From the past to sad and dim
A girl with face all wet and wan
Came slowly forth and haunted him.

TWICE MARRIED.

The trees were always called "The Lovers," and under their sweeping branches the young people were fond of gathering on moonlit summer evenings.

Pocahontas seated herself under the larger tree on the dry, warm grass, and Jim leaned against the rugged trunk, silently drinking in with his eyes the still beauty of the night—the silvery sheen of the water, the pure bend of the sky, the slope of the lawn, and the gray tranquility of the old house in the background. And as he gazed there awoke in his breast, adding to its pain, that weary yearning which men call homesickness.

"I wonder," she murmured presently, "if the nights out there—in Mexico, I mean—can be more beautiful than this. I have read descriptions, and dreamed dreams, but I can't imagine anything more perfect than that stretch of water shimmering in the moonlight, and the dark outline of the trees yonder against the sky."

"It's more than beautiful; it's home," Jim's voice shook a little. "Do you know, Princess, that whenever the memory of home comes to me out yonder in the tropics, it will be just this picture I shall always see. The river, the lights and shadows on the lawn, the old gray house, and you, with the flowers on your breast, and the moonlight on your dear face. Don't be afraid, or move away; I'm not going to make love to you—all that is over; but your face must always be to me the fairest and sweetest on earth." He paused a moment, and then added, looking steadily away from her: "I want to tell you, this last time I may ever have an opportunity of speaking to you alone—that you are never to be again—yourself for what has come and gone. It's been no fault of yours. You could no more help my loving you than I could help it myself; or than you could make yourself love me in return."

"Oh, Jim, dear," spoke the girl, quickly and penitently, "I do love you. I do, indeed."

"I know it, Princess, in exactly the same way you love Roy Garnett, and immeasurably less than you love Berkeley. That isn't what I wanted, dear. I'm a dull fellow, slow at understanding things, and I can't put my thoughts into graceful, fluent language; but I know what love is, and what I wanted you to feel is very different. Don't be unhappy about it—or me. I'll worry through the pain in time, or grow accustomed to it. It's tough, just at first, but I'll put it down somehow. It shall not spoil my life either, although it must mar it; a man must be a pitiful fellow, who lets himself go to the bad because the woman he loves won't have him. God means every man to hold up his own weight in this world. I'd as soon knock a woman down as throw the blame of a wasted life upon her."

Pocahontas listened with her eyes on the folded hands in her lap, realizing for the first time how deeply the man beside her loved her. Would any other man ever love her with such grand unselfishness, she wondered, ever give all, receive nothing in return, and still give on. Why could not she love him? Why was her heart still and speechless, and only her mind responsive. He was worthy of any woman's love; why could not she give him hers?

Ask the question now, she would, the answer was always the same. She did not love him; she could not love him; but the reason was beyond her.

After a little while Jim spoke again: "When you were a little girl," he said, "I always was your knight. In all our plays and troubles it was always me you wanted. My boat was the one you liked best, and my dog and horse would come to your whistle as quickly as to mine. I was the one always to care for you and carry out your will. That can never be again, I know, but don't forget me, Princess. Let the thought of your old friend come to you sometimes, not to trouble you, only to remind you when things are hard and rough, and you need comfort, that there's a heart in the world that would shed its last drop to help you."

With quick impulse Pocahontas leaned forward and caught his hand in hers, and before he could divine her intention, bent her head and laid her soft, warm lips against it. When she lifted her eyes to his there were tears in them and her voice trembled as she said: "I will think of you often, old friend; of how noble you are, and how unselfish. You have been generous to me all your life; far more generous than I have ever deserved."

As they rose to return to the house, the jasmine blossoms fell from the girl's hair to the ground at Jim's feet; he stooped and raised it. "May I keep it?" he said.

She bowed her head silently.

CHAPTER V.

In the dining-room at Lanarth stood Pocahontas, an expression of comical dismay upon her face, a pile of dusty volumes on the floor at her feet. The bookcase in the recess of the fireplace, with yawning doors and empty shelves, stood swept and garnished, awaiting re-possession. In a frenzy of untimely cleanliness, she had torn all the books from the repose of years, and now that the deed was done beyond recall, she was a prey to disgust, and given over to repentance. Berkeley passed the open window, looking cool and fresh in summer clothing, and Pocahontas, catching sight of him, put her fingers to her lips and whistled sharply to attract his attention, which being done, she followed up the advantage with pantomimic gestures, indicative of despair, and need of swift assistance. Berkeley turned good-naturedly,

and came in to the rescue, but when he discovered the service required of him, he regarded it with aversion, and showed a mean desire to retreat, which unworthiness was promptly detected by Pocahontas, and as promptly frustrated.

"Do help me, Berkeley," she entreated. "They must all be put in place again before dinner, and it only wants a quarter to 1 now. I can't do it all before half-past 2, to save my life, unless you help me. You know mother dislikes a messy, littered room, and I've got your favorite pudding for dessert. Oh, dear! I'm tired to death already, and it's so warm!" The rising inflection of her voice conveyed an impression of heat intense enough to drive an engine.

Thus adjured, Berkeley laid aside his coat, for lifting is warm work with the sun at the meridian. The empty shirt sleeve had a forlorn and piteous look as it hung crumpled and slightly twisted by his side. Berkeley caught it with his other hand and thrust the cuff in the waistband of his trousers. He was well used to his loss, and apparently indifferent to it, but the dangling of the empty sleeve worried him; the arm was gone close up at the shoulder.

Then the pair fell to work briskly, dusting, arranging, re-arranging and chatting pleasantly. Pocahontas piled the dusts, and her brother sorted the books and replaced them on the shelves. The sun shone in royally, until Pocahontas served a writ of ejectment on his majesty by closing all the shutters, and the sun promptly eluded it by peeping in between the bars. A little vagrant breeze stole in, full of idleness and mischief, and meddled with the books—fluttering the leaves of "The Fairy Queen," which lay on its back wide open, lifting up the pages, and flitting them over roughly as though bent on finding secrets. The little noise attracted the girl's attention, and she raised the book and wiped the covers with her duster. As she slapped it lightly with her hand to get out all the dust, a letter slipped from among the leaves and fell to the floor near Berkeley's feet.

"Where did this come from?" he inquired, as he picked it up.

"Out of this book," she answered, holding up the volume in her hand. "It fell out while I was dusting; some one must have left it in to mark a place. It must have been in the book for years; see how soiled it is. Whose is it?"

There is something in the unexpected finding of a stray letter which stimulates curiosity, and Berkeley turned it in his hand to read the address. The envelope was soiled like the coat of a traveler, and the letter was crumpled as though a hand had closed over it roughly. The writing was distinct and clearly. "Berkeley Mason, Esq., Wintergreen, Co., Virginia." Mr. Mason examined the blurred, indistinct postmark. "Point," something, it seemed to be; and on the other side, Washington, plain enough, and the date, May 1865. What letter had been forwarded him from the seat of government in the spring of '65? Then memory unfolded itself like a map whose spring is loosened.

POINT LOOKOUT, MAY—1865.

To Berkeley Mason, Esq., Virginia.

Sir,—A Confederate soldier, now a prisoner of war at this place, giving his name as Temple Mason, is lying in the prison hospital at the point of death. He was too ill to be sent south with the general transfer, and in compliance with his urgent request, I write again—the third time, to inform you of his condition. He can't last much longer, and in event of his dying without hearing from his friends, he will be buried in the common cemetery connected with the prison, and his identity, in all probability, lost. This is what he appears to dread, and he entreats that you will give him, in God's name, if you are necessary. The utmost dispatch will be necessary. Respectfully, FRANCIS SMITH, B. G. U. S. A. Commandant, U. S. P., Point Lookout.

Pocahontas came and seated herself on her brother's knee, gazing at him with wide grey eyes filled with inquiry. "When did this come? I never saw it before," she questioned, gravely.

Then with troubled brow, and voice that grew husky at times, he went over for her the sad story of the last months of the last year of that unhappy and fateful struggle. In the autumn of '64 their brother Temple, a lad of 17, had been taken prisoner, with others of his troop, while making a reconnaissance, and they had been unable to discover either his condition or place of incarceration. Mason, himself, had been at home on sick leave, weak and worn with the loss of his arm and a saber cut across his head. All through the winter and spring, while calamity followed calamity with stunning rapidity, the wearing anxiety about Temple continued, made more intolerable by the contradictory reports of his fate brought by passing soldiers. Finally, this letter had arrived and converted a dread fear into a worse certainty.

It had been handed to Roy Garnett by a Federal officer at Richmond, and Roy had ridden straight down with it all those weary miles, feeling curiously certain that it contained news of Temple, and sharing their anxiety to the full. Roy had been stanch and helpful in their trouble, aiding in the hurried preparations for the journey, and accompanying the wounded man, and the pale, resolute mother on their desperate mission. Then came the hideous journey, the arrival at the prison, the fearful questioning, the relief akin to pain of the reply; the interview with the bluff, kindly commandant, who took their hands heartily and rendered them every assistance in his power. Then, in the rough hospital of the hostile prison, the strange, sad waiting for the end, followed by the stranger, sadder homecoming. It was a pitiful story, common enough both north and south, but none the less pitiful for its commonness.

With her head down on her brother's shoulder, Pocahontas sobbed convulsively. She was familiar with the outlines of the tale, and knew vaguely of the weeks of anxiety that had lined her mother's gentle face and silvered her brown hair, but of all particulars she was ignorant. She had been very young at the time these sad events occurred; the young brother sleeping in the shadow of the cedars in the old burying-ground was scarcely more than a name to her, and the memories of her childhood had faded somewhat, crowded out by the cheerful realities of her glad girl-life.

When she broke the silence, it was very softly. Berkeley, she said, "it was kindly done of that Federal officer to let us know. This is the third letter he wrote about poor Temple; the others must have miscarried."

They did; and this one only reached

us just in time. You see, communication with the south in those early days was more than uncertain. If Roy hadn't happened to be in Richmond, it's a question whether I should have received this one. It was kindly done, as you say, and this General Smith was a kindly man. I shall never forget his kindness for my mother, nor his consideration for poor Temple. But for his aid we could hardly have managed at the last, in spite of Roy's efforts. We owe him a debt of gratitude I'd fain repay. God bless him!"

"Amen!" echoed Pocahontas, softly.

CHAPTER VI.

One bright, crisp morning about the middle of October, Pocahontas stood in the back yard surrounded by a large flock of turkeys. Turkeys were the young lady's specialty, and on them alone of all the denizens of the poultry yard did she bestow her personal attention. From the thrilling moment in early spring when she scribbled the date of its arrival on the first egg, until the full-grown birds were handed over to Aunt Rachel to be fattened for the table, the turkeys were her particular charge, and each morning and afternoon saw her sally forth, armed with a pan full of curds, or a loaf of brown bread, for her flock. Her usual attendant, on these occasions, was a little colored boy named Sawney—the last of a line of Sawneys extending back to the dining-room servant of Pocahontas's great-grandmother.

On this particular morning Pocahontas, having emptied her basket, was watching her flock with interest and admiration, when Berkeley made his appearance on the porch with a letter in his hand. He seemed in a hurry, and called to his sister impatiently, "Look here, Princess," he said, as he handed her the letter from Jim to old Aunt Violet, his "mammy." He told me he had promised the old woman to write to her. It came with my mail this morning, and I haven't time to go over to Shirley and read it to her; I wish you would. She's too poorly to come after it herself, so put on your bonnet and step over there now, like a good girl."

"Step over there, indeed!" laughed Pocahontas. "How insinuatingly you put it. Aunt Violet's cabin is way over at Shirley; half a mile beyond Jim Byrd's line fence."

"General Smith's line fence, you mean. I wish you'd go, Princess. There's money in the letter, and I don't want to send it by the negroes. I promised Jim we'd look after the old woman for them. The girls want her to come to Richmond, but she won't consent to quit the old place. She hasn't any children of her own, you know."

Pocahontas extended her hand for the letter. "She ought to go to Richmond and live with Belle or Nina," she said, slipping it into her pocket. "She'd die of homesickness way out in California with Susie. I wonder whether the new people will let her stay at Shirley?"

"Oh, yes; Jim made every arrangement when he found she wouldn't consent to move. He had an understanding with General Smith about the corner of land her cabin stands on; reserved it, or leased it, or something. It's all right."

Always kind, always considerate, thought the girl wistfully, even amid the pain and hurry of departure—the smothering of old ties, finding time to care for the comfort of his old nurse. Good, faithful Jim.

"Have the new people come?" she called after her brother, as he disappeared within the house.

"I don't know. I rather think they have," he answered. "I noticed smoke rising from the kitchen chimney this morning. Ask Aunt Rachel—the negroes are sure to know."

Pausing a moment at the kitchen door to request the servants to inform her mother that she had walked over to Shirley to read a letter to old Aunt Violet, and would be home in an hour or so, Pocahontas set out on her expedition, never noticing that little Sawney, with a muttered "He'd wine too," was resolutely following her. The way led along a pleasant country road, as level as a table, which ran, with every movement a curve. Her look and voice harmonized with her carriage; she pleased his artistic sense, and he lowered his lids a little as he watched her, as one focuses a fine picture or statue.

Even in that brief interview, Pocahontas had touched a chord in his nature no woman had ever touched before; it vibrated—very faintly, but enough to arrest Thorne's attention, for an instant, and to cause him to bend his ear and listen. In some subtle way a difference was established between her and all other women. Her ready acceptance of his aid, her absolute lack of self-consciousness, even her calmly courteous dismissal of him, piqued Thorne's curiosity and interest. He reflected that in all probability he would meet her soon again, and the idea pleased him.

Pocahontas related her adventure gleefully when they all assembled at dinner; and the amusement it excited was great. Berkeley insisted teasingly that her deliverer would develop into one of the workmen from Washington, employed by General Smith in the renovation of Shirley. One of the carpenters, or—as he looked gentlemanly and wore a coat, a fresco man, abroad in search of an original idea for the dining-room ceiling. This idea she had obligingly furnished him, and he would be able to make a very effective ceiling of her, and Sawney, and the sheep, if he should handle them rightly. These suggestions Pocahontas scouted, maintaining gayly that the dark stranger was none other than her "Smith," the very identical John of her destiny.

CHAPTER VII.

The Smith family speedily settled down into their new home, and after the first feeling of strangeness had worn off, were forced to acknowledge that the reality of country living was not so disagreeable as they had anticipated. The neighborhood was pleasantly and thickly settled, the people kind-hearted and hospitable. True, Mrs. Smith still secretly yearned for modern conveniences and the comforts of a daily market, and felt that time alone could reconcile her to the unreliability and inefficiency of colored servants, but even she had compensation. Her husband—whose time, since his retirement, had hung like lead upon his hands, was busy, active and interested, full of plans, and reveling in the pure delight of buying expensive machinery for the negroes to break, and tons of fertilizers for them to waste. The girls were pleased,

peeping through the cracks until she should get back to him. Since he had followed her so far, it would be better to let him go all the way.

"Come, then," she said, doubtfully, "I suppose I must take you, although you had no business to follow me. If the sheep come after us, Sawney, remember that you're not afraid. You must not cry, or hold on to my dress with your dirty little hands. Do you hear?"

"Ya-m," acquiesced Sawney, with suspicious readiness, resuming his line of march behind her.

They pursued their way uneventfully until they had reached the middle of the field when the catastrophe, which Pocahontas had anticipated, occurred. A flock of sheep peacefully grazing at a little distance, suddenly raised their heads, and advanced with joyful bleating, evidently regarding the pair as ministering spirits come to gratify their saline yearning. Sawney—perjured Sawney! all unmindful of his promise, no sooner beheld their advance, than he halted instantly, the muscles of his face working ominously.

"Perhaps I can be of service to you."

She started, and glanced round quickly. A slender, dark, young man, a stranger, was standing beside her, glancing, with unconcealed amusement, from her flushed, irate countenance to the sulky, streaming visage at her feet.

"Oh, thank you; you can indeed," accepting his proffered aid with grateful readiness. "If you will kindly drive these sheep away, I'll be much indebted to you. This provoking little boy is afraid of them, or pretends to be, and I can't induce him to stir. Now, Sawney, hush that abominable noise this instant! The gentleman is going to drive all the sheep away."

With perfect gravity, but his eyes full of laughter, Nesbit Thorne flourished his cane and advanced on the flock menacingly. The animals backed slowly. "Will that do?" he called, when he had driven them about a hundred yards.

"A little further, please," she answered. "No, a great deal further; quite to the end of the field. He won't move yet!" Her voice quivered with suppressed mirth.

Feeling like "Little Boy Blue" recalled to a sense of duty, Thorne pursued the sheep remorselessly; the poor beasts, convinced at last that disappointment was to be their portion, trotted before him meekly, giving vent to their feelings in occasional bleats of reproach.

Meanwhile, Pocahontas lifted Sawney forcibly to his feet, and led him across to the opposite fence, over which she helped him to climb, being determined that no more scenes should be inflicted on her that morning. When she had put a barrier between him and danger, she ordered him to sit down and calm his shattered nerves and cover his behavior. She remained within the field, herself, leaning against the fence and awaiting the gentleman's return, that she might thank him.

By the time he rejoined her, Nesbit Thorne had decided that his new acquaintance was a very handsome and unusually attractive woman. The adventure amused him, and he had a mind to pursue it further. As he approached, he removed his hat courteously, with a pleasant, half-jocular remark about the demoralized condition of her escort, and a word indicative of his surprise at finding a country child, of any color, afraid of animals.

"Yes; it is unusual," she assented, smiling on him with her handsome gray eyes. "I can't account for his terror, for I'm sure no animal has ever harmed him."

He would gladly have detained her talking in the pleasant sunshine, or even—time was no object, and all ways alike—have liked to saunter on beside her, but there was no mistaking the quiet decision of her manner as she repeated her thanks and bade him good morning.

"Who the dickens was she?" he wondered idly as he leaned on the fence in his turn, and watched the graceful figure disappearing in the distance. She walked well, he noticed, without any of the ugly tricks of gait so many women have; firm and upright, with head finely poised, and every movement a curve. Her look and voice harmonized with her carriage; she pleased his artistic sense, and he lowered his lids a little as he watched her, as one focuses a fine picture or statue.

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and Norma happier and less difficult than she had been for years. And, best and most welcome of all, Warner appeared to strengthen. As for Percival, his satisfaction knew no bounds; his father had given him a gun and Nesbit Thorne was teaching him how to use it.

At the eleventh hour Nesbit Thorne had decided to accompany his relatives in their fitting, instead of waiting to visit them later in the season. He was incited thereto by idleness and curiosity, leavened by curiosity as to the manner in which their future life would be ordered, and also by a genuine desire to be of service to them in the troublesome move. Perhaps there was, besides, an unacknowledged feeling in his breast, that with the departure of his kindred, New York would become lonelier, more wearisome than ever. They had given him a semblance of a home, and there was in the man's nature an undercurrent of yearning after love and the rounding out of true domestic life, that fretted and chafed in its obstructed channel, and tried here and there blindly for another outlet.

Thorne's coming with them seemed to the Smiths a very natural proceeding. His aunt proposed it one day, when he had been more than usually helpful, vowing that she scarcely knew how to get along without him, and Thorne fell in with the proposal at once; it made little difference, since he was coming for the shooting anyway. If Norma had another theory in regard to his unwillingness to be separated from them, she was careful to keep it hidden.

From the first they were thrown much into the society of the Lanarth family, for the Masons at once assumed right of property in them, being bent with simple loyalty on defraying some portion of their debt of gratitude. When their loved one was "sick and in prison" these strangers had extended to him kindness, and now that opportunity offered, that kindness should be returned, full measure, pressed down and running over. For the general, Pocahontas conceived a positive enthusiasm—a feeling which the jolly old soldier was not slow in discovering, nor backward in reciprocating; the pair were the best of friends.

Ever since the finding of the letter, the girl's mind had been filled with the story of the brother whom she scarcely remembered. With tender imagination she exaggerated his youth, his courage, his hardships, and glorified him into a hero. Everything connected with him appeared pitiful and sacred; his sabre hung above the mantle, crossed with his father's, and she took it down one morning and half drew the dull blade from the scabbard. The brass of the hilt, and the trimmings of the belt and scabbard were tarnished, and even corroded in places. She got a cloth and burnished them until they shone like gold. When she replaced it the contrast with the other sword hurt her, and a rush of remorseful tenderness made her take that down also, and burnish it carefully. Poor father! almost as unknown as the young brother, she was grieved that he should have been the second thought.

She was restoring her father's sword to its place, and re-arranging the crimson sash, faded and streaked in its folds, from wear and time, when Norma and Blanche arrived, escorted by Nesbit Thorne. Little Sawney had been sitting on the hearth-rug watching her polish the arms, and offering suggestions, and Pocahontas dispatched him to invite her guests into the parlor, while she ran upstairs to remove the traces of her work. The young people, from Shirley often walked over in the afternoons; the way was short and pleasant, and the brother and sister usually accompanied them part of the way home.

Pocahontas was generally willing enough to tell her stories, unless indeed Norma happened to be present, and then the improvisatrice was dumb. Pocahontas was not in sympathy with Norma. Norma thought old stories great rubbish, and did not scruple to show that such was her opinion, and Pocahontas resented it. One evening, in the beginning of their acquaintance, the three girls had walked down to the old willows at the foot of the lawn, and Pocahontas, for the amusement of her guests, had related the little story connected with them.

"I think it was all great foolishness," Norma declared. "If she loved the man, why not marry him at once like a sensible woman? The idea of making him wait three years, and watch a rubbishy little tree just because his brother would have made a scene. What if he did make a scene? He would soon have submitted to the inevitable, and made friends. The lady couldn't have cared much for her lover, to be willing to put up with that driving probation."

"She did love him," retorted Pocahontas, with annoyance, "and she proved it by being willing to sacrifice a little of her happiness to spare him the bitterness of a quarrel with his own brother. The men were twins, and they loved one another, until unnatural rivalry pushed family affection into the background. If the matter had been settled when both were at white heat, an estrangement would have ensued which it would have taken years to heal—if it ever was healed. There's no passion so unyielding as family hate. They were her kinsmen, too, men of her own blood; she must think of them, outside of herself. The welfare of the man she didn't love must be considered as well as that of the man she did love—more, if anything, because she gave him so much less. How could she come between twin brothers, and turn their affection to hatred? She knew them both—knew that her own true lover would hold firm for all the years of his life, so that she could safely trust him for three. And she knew that the lighter nature would, in all probability, prove inconstant; and if he left her of his own free will, there could be no ill-feeling, and no remorse."

Norma laughed derisively. "And in this fine self-sacrifice she had no thought of her lover," quoth she. "His pain was nothing. She sacrificed him, too."

"And why not? Surely no man would grudge a paltry three years out of his whole life's happiness to avoid so dreadful a thing as ill blood between twin brothers. If she could wait for his sake, he could wait for hers. A woman must not cheapen herself; if she is worth winning, she must exact the effort."

"I think it is a lovely story," Blanche interposed, decidedly. "The lady behaved beautifully; just exactly as she should have done. A quarrel between brothers is